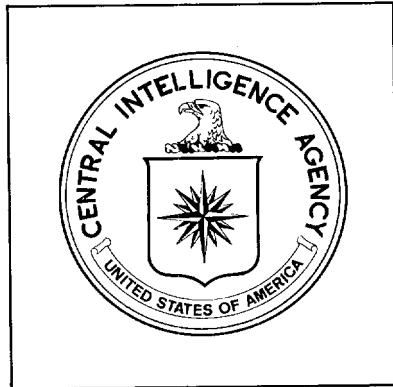


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MIDDLE EAST – AFRICA – SOUTH ASIA

This publication is prepared for regional specialists in the Washington community by the Middle East - Africa Division, Office of Current Intelligence, with occasional contributions from other offices within the Directorate of Intelligence. Comments and queries are welcome. They should be directed to the authors of the individual articles.

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USSR-Lebanon

Moscow's Reaction to the Turmoil

The Soviets have publicly welcomed the current breathing spell in Lebanon and expressed hope that it will lead to an end to the turmoil. They clearly would prefer to see the emergence of a more leftist government in Lebanon, but fear this cannot be accomplished without risking another Arab-Israeli war.

Among Moscow's worries are:

- That turmoil in Lebanon might eventually trigger Syrian and Israeli intervention, requiring the Soviets to increase their support of the Arabs.
- That civil war and foreign intervention in Lebanon could force the fedayeen to abandon their base of operations there and disperse to other Arab countries, diluting Moscow's already limited influence over the fedayeen and increasing their dependence on Arab governments.
- That the Lebanese situation is distracting the fedayeen and Syrians from objectives more important to the Soviets, specifically, undercutting US influence in the Middle East and isolating Egypt.

Despite the conflict between Soviet interest in supporting the left and avoiding an intensification of the fighting, the Soviets have tried to achieve both goals. They have consistently praised the "restraint and maturity" of Yasir Arafat and the Palestine Liberation Organization for staying out of the fighting, and have labeled the fedayeen who have been involved in the fighting as "terrorists."

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Moscow has privately warned the PLO of the danger of Israeli intervention, has approved of its decision to steer clear of the fighting, and has urged it to support the efforts of the Lebanese government to regain control of the country.

At the same time, the Soviets have made clear that they will support the PLO if its people and facilities are threatened. In October, they increased arms shipments to the PLO and sent 30 rocket launchers especially designed for street combat.

The Soviets apparently told Syrian President Asad last month in Moscow that they supported its efforts to reduce tension in Lebanon. The need for a peaceful settlement of the conflict in Lebanon has been the prevailing theme of Moscow's public comment--including its broadcasts to the Arabs--throughout the period of conflict. Last week, Soviet Ambassador Soldatov met with Lebanese Prime Minister Karami, publicly backed his efforts to achieve stability, and urged him to support reforms favorable to the left.

Moscow has consistently championed Lebanese "progressive forces," supporting their positions on the issues at stake and stressing their efforts for a negotiated solution. Moscow seeks increased influence in Lebanese political life and a stronger position for the relatively small Lebanese Communist Party.

The USSR appears to have acquiesced in efforts by the Lebanese Communist Party to enhance its standing with the Lebanese left by participating in the fighting. From the early stages of the conflict, party members have been prominent behind the barricades; in April or May, the Soviets unsuccessfully urged the PLO to arm the party.

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Moscow apparently has not given the Lebanese Communists all the help they want, however, and may not be able to control party militants. In September, party leaders complained about the lack of more direct Soviet backing. In October, when the shooting threatened to draw in outsiders, the Soviet embassy in Beirut reportedly sought to get the party militants to withdraw from the fighting.

At present, there is not evidence available that Moscow has shipped arms to any leftist combatants, but neither is there any sign that it has sought to halt the flow of Soviet-made arms from Arab countries to them. Kamal Jumblatt's Progressive Socialist Party has continued buying arms directly from East European countries, while the commercial sources of East European-made arms for the conservative Phalangists have dried up. Moscow undoubtedly thinks that as long as the Phalangists are heavily armed, the Lebanese leftists must have what they need to protect themselves and preserve the influence of the Palestinians in the country.

If intense fighting resumes, the Soviets will probably continue to do what they can to curb fedayeen or Syrian actions that could lead to general hostilities in the Middle East. At the same time, Moscow will seek to preserve its ties with the fedayeen and Lebanese leftists, perhaps by offering more explicit Soviet supportive actions in the event the Muslim position is threatened and by moving directly to ensure adequate supplies of arms. (SECRET NOFORN/NOCONTARCT/ORCON)

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USSR-Afghanistan

Podgorny May Visit Kabul

Soviet chief of state Podgorny will visit Kabul in the near future, [REDACTED]

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25X1C [REDACTED] The report seems plausible since the Soviets and the Afghans routinely exchange visits on an annual basis and Afghan President Daoud was in Moscow in June 1974. Podgorny's trip is ostensibly to inspect a Soviet irrigation project, but his main concern is probably to take a first-hand look at the Daoud government since the President's purges of leftist officials, including cabinet members, in August and September.

25X1C [REDACTED] the Soviets have already demonstrated their displeasure over Daoud's actions against Afghan leftists by dragging their feet in supplying agreed-upon military equipment. He says that Moscow has postponed delivery of [REDACTED] tanks until next April and that there are at least 4,000 crates of Soviet military items stalled at the border awaiting clearance from Moscow.

25X1B [REDACTED]
25X1C [REDACTED] Soviet military specialists attached to Afghan units have been less active. [REDACTED]
25X1C [REDACTED] the Soviets denied visas to Afghan students scheduled to participate in an exchange program in the Soviet Union last month.

Moscow is undoubtedly displeased about Daoud's move against the leftists, but the available evidence does not bear out Afghan allegations that the Soviets are using military aid and the student exchange program to express their concern. For one thing, Moscow has continued to provide weapons to Kabul since Daoud took action against the leftists. In fact, deliveries since August have been greater than in the preceding months in 1975. It is possible that the backlog at the border was created because the Soviets wanted to

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move the material quickly into Afghanistan before winter set in and the paper work has not yet caught up.

The Soviet-Afghan student exchange program has been plagued with problems before. The real issue has not been state-to-state relations, but rather Daoud's desire to exercise more control over the selection of scholarship recipients. (SECRET NOFORN/NOCONTRACT/ORCON)

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